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Tepoztecanos do not like to confess; the majority do so only once a year. Not giving much importance to sin, Tepoztecanos do not regard confession as necessary. Most men consider confession important only when one is about to die but "with the pangs of death, who's going to remember to confess properly?" Women, particularly married women, are less reluctant to confess, and about fifty women are known to take communion and confess quite often. Through the Acción Católica the number of young people of both sexes who do this has increased. Perhaps the most important deterrent to confession, especially among the older people, is that the priest may exact from the confessor the recitation of certain prayers which most people cannot say accurately. Fearing a scolding from the priest, they prefer to avoid the situation. There is no such difficulty with communion. "We would all take communion more often if we didn't have to confess; that we always avoid."

In general, the Tepoztecan feels obliged to contribute to the church and does so by paying *limosnas*. There is a belief that he who refuses to give alms will find that no one receives his soul in heaven and that therefore he must go to hell. He who always gives alms finds that when he dies and his soul goes to heaven, "the Saint to whom he has given alms comes to receive the soul and intercedes with God to allow him to enter, and so he gets to heaven." Thus, when a Tepoztecan lights a candle to some saint or deposits a coin or two in the box, he considers himself deserving of the protection of that saint.

Tithes, which were obligatory and were collected by the government for the church before the Revolution, no longer exist. The local priest, however, hires a *limosnero* at harvest time to go about the fields, riding on a mule, to collect contributions from the farmers. As a rule, each farmer gives about twelve ears of corn, so that the priest collects a good amount for his stores.

Religious beliefs in Tepoztlán reflect Tepoztecan social character and world view. The profoundly practical nature of Tepoztecanos precludes religious fantasy, mysticism, and any preoccupation with metaphysics; they seek from religion concrete solutions to problems of daily life and go about it in as direct a manner as their religion permits. Their religious world, like the world in which they live, is full of hostile forces and punishing figures which must be propitiated to secure good will and protection. The act of propitiation is direct and simple, consisting of giving something or doing something which is known to please a particular saint, such as lighting a candle, giving a few coins, offering flowers, burning incense, reciting a special prayer, or performing a certain dance; these offerings incur an obligation on the part of the recipient to favor the donor.

As in most mestizo communities in Mexico and Central America, Tepoztecan religious beliefs represent a fusion of Catholic and pagan elements. The people's concept of God is vague at best; the one characteristic which is clear to Tepoztecanos is that he is a punishing God who acts in ways hostile to men. Most misfortunes are ascribed to him; good fortune rarely.

The Holy Trinity is viewed as consisting of three distinct gods. One is God the Father, who is usually pictured with a long, white beard and a large ball in his

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alone, "when I am dead," or "when I am underground," in conversation. There is no attempt to protect children from the facts of death. Children of all ages attend wakes, view the corpses, participate in funeral processions and at burials. Little emotion is expressed about death or the dead, although close relatives of the recent dead may shed brief tears if the subject is discussed. Grief is restrained but varies somewhat according to the age and status of the deceased. 761
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The death of an old person or an infant causes relatively little disturbance, that of a parent or adult who is still in full vigor, or of a grown son or daughter, much more so. Reactions to the death of a husband or wife depend upon the quality of the marital relationship but, again, is rarely demonstrative. Suicide is uncommon, and in no case has anyone ever killed himself because of the death of a loved one. 765
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At death, Tepoztecan are concerned with the release of the soul from the body and with its journey to heaven. It is said that under certain circumstances it is difficult for a person to give himself up to death, and the agony of dying is prolonged. Witches and some *curanderos* are said to die "very badly," that is, slowly, losing consciousness and fainting without being able to give up their soul, because they need time to repent all the evil things they have done. Prostitutes also suffer a difficult death, "because they supported themselves with their own bodies. These women see terrible visions and figures which threaten to drag them off, and in their agony they scratch at the bedclothes and at their own faces and hands." Often children "cannot die until they receive a benediction from their parents or god-parents." Also a father or mother "cannot die if their children cry too much." In such cases the children are taken away, to hasten death. When death comes, the soul leaves the body and may be seen as a figure, resembling the deceased, leaving the house, and Tepoztecan say, "... this is his soul which walks without touching the ground and without showing its face although it wears no hat. It is very white, like foam, and disappears when it touches something." 763
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It is believed that when a person is about to die "his eyes go up and become whitish, his nose sharpens, his hands get cold and still, and his body becomes loose." At these signs, the dying person is taken from the bed and placed on a *petate* on the floor in a corner. He is covered with a sheet, his clothing is removed, and he is dressed in clean clothes. After death he is placed on a table and covered with a sheet, so that "those of little spirit" will not be made ill at the sight of the corpse. A newspaper is spread on the *petate*, and a cross of sand and lime is fashioned on the newspaper.² Flowers are placed above the cross, and a candle, which burns day and night for nine days, is placed at the head of the *petate*. If the deceased is a man, his sombrero and huaraches are laid next to the candle; if a woman, her *reboso* is placed there. The clothing of the dead person is washed and ironed and placed at the head of the *petate*. A *rezandero* is hired by the bereaved family to come to the house to pray twice a day, at noon and in the evening, for nine days. The women of the house are required to be present and to kneel in prayer. 764
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² A similar custom is reported for Mita. See Parsons, *Mita*, p. 141.

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sandals lined with gold paper. The hands and feet are tied with a ribbon when the body is laid out, and untied at the grave. When the child is dying, a palm to offer to God is placed in his hands; and after death, flowers are added. A crown of paper flowers is placed on the head, and the face is covered with a veil. Both of these are removed at the grave. A small painted gourd is placed beside the body, to provide the soul with water on its journey to heaven. The litter is carried by children of the same sex as the deceased, and as the body is carried out of the house, the barrio chapel bell is rung.

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